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INTERIM STUDY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION ISSUES

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MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: August 22, 2000
Meeting Time: 10:00 A.M.
Meeting Place: State House, 200 W. Washington
St., Room 233
Meeting City: Indianapolis, Indiana
Meeting Number: 2

Members Present: Rep. Gregory Porter, Chairperson; Rep. Richard Bodiker; Rep. Clyde Kersey; Rep. Robert Behning; Rep. Sue Scholer; Rep. Phyllis Pond; Sen. Teresa Lubbers, Vice-Chairperson; Sen. Steven Johnson; Sen. Ron Alting; Sen. Billie Breaux; Sen. Earline Rogers.

Members Absent: Sen. Connie Sipes.

The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 10:10 A.M., and called upon Rep. Bob Hoffman to introduce the topic for the meeting, funding for vocational education. Rep. Hoffman explained that changes in the funding formula passed in the most recent budget bill called for vocational education programs to be reimbursed based on the level of demand for the skills taught in the programs. While he agreed that in general high demand/high wage skills should receive more funding, he also felt the funding formula should take into account the following

¹ Exhibits and other materials referenced in these minutes can be inspected and copied in the Legislative Information Center in Room 230 of the State House in Indianapolis, Indiana. Requests for copies may be mailed to the Legislative Information Center, Legislative Services Agency, 200 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2789. A fee of \$0.15 per page and mailing costs will be charged for copies. These minutes are also available on the Internet at the General Assembly homepage. The URL address of the General Assembly homepage is <http://www.ai.org/legislative/>. No fee is charged for viewing, downloading, or printing minutes from the Internet.

factors: (1) changes in vocational education programs generally require new equipment; (2) time should be given for the transition to new programs, as new labs and courses will be needed; and (3) start-up money to allow vocational programs to change direction should be included in the formula. Rep. Hoffman then asked the Department of Education (Department) to provide an overview of vocational education in Indiana.

Patty Shutt, director of Career and Technical Education for the Department, explained that vocational education prepares students for a technology-based workplace and for further education and training. There has been a change in emphasis from occupation-specific skills to teaching soft skills and the reinforcement of hard skills, with rigorous standards to prepare students with both the academic and technical skills for upward mobility. The six major areas of vocational education are agricultural, business, marketing, health occupations, family and consumer sciences, and trade and industrial. During the 1998-1999 school year, 38% of public school students took part in at least one vocational education program. Some vocational programs earn both high school and college credit. The Department provides curriculum and technical assistance and staff development opportunities for school corporations.

Bill Riley, a budget analyst for the Department, explained the history of funding formulas for vocational education. Under the current formula, school corporations receive funding for vocational programs through an add-on for each student participating, with the add-on weighted according to the type of program. Under the new formula, school corporations will receive a specific dollar amount per student based on whether the student is in a vocational program that prepares the student for a field in which there is more than moderate, moderate, or less than moderate labor demand (as determined by the Department of Workforce Development). This formula will take effect January 1, 2002. Mr. Riley provided suggestions for amending the formula. (Mr. Riley's testimony is summarized in Attachment A.)

Luberta Jenkins, vocational education director for Indianapolis Public Schools, explained why vocational education is good for students and introduced Wendell Price, a commercial arts instructor in IPS, and Ray Allison, a former student of Mr. Price who is now a graphics designer, who spoke concerning the benefits his vocational education had provided.

Meredith Thompson, executive director of the Indiana Association of Area Vocational Directors, stated that the area centers serve over 100,000 students, primarily juniors and seniors enrolled in half-day programs. He explained that area vocational centers were developed during the 1960s to allow school corporations to jointly provide programs that would be difficult to provide individually. Currently, the state is divided into 48 area districts, which pool resources and eliminate duplication of programs, in addition to providing better facilities than individual school corporations could provide. Mr. Thompson distributed a chart setting forth the budget weights for area vocational centers (Attachment B). (Mr. Thompson's testimony is summarized in Attachment C.)

Steve Barkdull, director of vocational and technical education for the Elkhart Area Career Center, stated that while federal support makes up less than four percent of

the budget for local vocational programs, the programs must comply with various federal requirements to continue to receive the funds. He pointed out that the financing of the buildings for area centers tends to fall most heavily on the school corporation that hosts the area center. Finally, Mr. Barkdull stated what he perceives as advantages that vocational education provides to schools: the reinforcement of academic skills; preventing drop-outs; and providing values education. (Mr. Barkdull's handout concerning federal support and business/education partnerships that have been established by vocational centers can be found in Attachment D.)

Jon Groth, area vocational director for Porter County and president of the Indiana Association of Area Vocational Directors, stated that his center serves nine high schools and offers 25 vocational programs. He feels that vocational education works for both students and communities by providing workforce development, and that all students should leave high school with marketable skills. In his opinion, state mandates have negatively impacted vocational education, and the current funding formula is flawed. He urged the General Assembly to provide program improvement funding and to include a vocational equipment line item in the budget. (Mr. Groth's testimony is included as Attachment E.)

Mike Walton, Richmond area vocational center director, representing the Indiana Association of Vocational Technical Educators, explained the system of career clusters in which students declare a career major. He has seen a growth in the number of academic students in vocational programs, and stated that most vocational students who go to college will complete college.

Wanda Fox, associate professor, consumer and family sciences education at Purdue University, explained that consumer and family science is no longer the traditional "home economics", but has changed dramatically over the past six years. The programs now lead students to careers and are an integral part of vocational education, as well as teaching students employability and life skills. Consumer and family science programs present a logical sequence of career preparation courses and individual and family oriented courses. Projected wage and employment levels for careers that begin with education in consumer and family sciences, such as early childhood education, are rising, and Ms. Fox finds the numbers have been underestimated. (Ms. Fox's handout to the Committee is Attachment F. Her testimony is Attachment G.)

Steve Cunningham, area vocational director for New Albany, stated he supported the changes to the vocational funding formula set forth by Mr. Riley. He pointed out that while vocational education is the last chance for many high school students to develop marketable skills for high skill, high wage jobs, vocational education is also for "smart kids" who follow a more traditional academic curriculum. In his area, because of scheduling, a student cannot complete both a Core 40 curriculum and a vocational education curriculum. He stated that parents need to be better informed of the vocational education options being offered.

Dennis Costerison, Indiana Association of School Business Officials (also speaking on behalf of the Indiana School Boards Association and the Indiana Association of Public School Superintendents), pointed out that while there was an extensive

study conducted to determine funding levels for the current vocational funding formula, similar studies have not been conducted for the new formula. He suggested that there is a need to make sure the formula works before it goes into effect, and so he has been meeting with legislative staff and others to work out revisions.

Dale Butcher, an agricultural science and business teacher, raised concerns about the financial stability of agricultural science programs under the new formula. He explained that he feels the employment statistics for agriculture used in developing the new formula are flawed, and asked that the Committee recommend the Department of Workforce Development gather new statistics. Mr. Butcher introduced Bennie Shore, a teacher in the North Montgomery school corporation, who explained that farming is a different profession than it has been in the past, and so agricultural teaching is different as well, with more emphasis on areas such as biotechnology.

Christian McKinnon, a teacher in the STAR (Science and Technology of Agricultural Resources) Academy of the Indianapolis Public Schools, explained that his program is a combination college prep and vocational education program. As a magnet high school program for Indianapolis, 80% of his students are on the free or reduced lunch program. Sarah Besser, a student in the STAR Academy, explained how she completed a supervised agricultural experience working through the Garfield Park conservatory to develop neighborhood gardens. She plans to attend college, focusing on a degree in environmental science.

Bob Kraft, Indiana Farm Bureau, stated that agriculture is an increasingly broad area: for example, food sciences are emerging as a major industry in Indiana. Thus, funding for vocational agricultural programs must be continued. He stated that facilities for vocational education must be funded, but vocational education priorities for areas need to be decided on a local level.

Rep. Bob Cherry, speaking as a vocational agriculture teacher, stated that he has found that students who are involved in vocational education and vocational agriculture have improved life skills. He urged that the employment statistics for agriculture be reexamined.

Terry Spradlin, Indiana Department of Education, distributed a list of definitions for gifted and talented programs for the Committee to examine before the next meeting (Attachment H). The meeting was adjourned at 12:40 p.m.